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Fulbright Shows Deep Suspicion of Johnson Aims

The idea of a Monroe doctrine for Asia is so intrinsically absurd that President Johnson, to say nothing of Senator J. William Fulbright, would not give it a first thought. It is equally absurd that the United States would undertake to control the destiny of all Asia and impose, in the words of Fulbright, "American hegemony" over this vast area of the globe.

It was not surprising, therefore, that President Johnson sent Press Secretary Bill D. Moyers charging out of his office to refute Fulbright's absurdities in the Senate before they could be printed unchallenged in the morning papers. The President was coldly angry, for Fulbright had held up to ridicule and sarcasm ideas and concepts that Johnson had not expressed and does not believe.

Fulbright's attack on Johnson's Asian policy shows no more than the depth of his unallayable suspicion that by stealth and deception Johnson seeks to establish preeminent U.S. responsibility for Asia as if it were a protectorate.

This is not the aim of Johnson policy and those who think so have been oversold by the new-found enthusiasm of Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and the rationalizations of Walt Whitman Rostow, who talks in normal conversation as if he were dictating an article for Foreign Affairs quarterly. Rostow is a foreign policy adviser to the President.

Fulbright is far too sophisticated to be misled by Humphrey's enthusiasms or Rostow's ruminations, but he offered some of their observations in private and in public as proof that Johnson is off on

some new disastrous adventure, which the Senate will find out about only after it becomes established policy.

It is always well to listen to Fulbright right to the end. Sometimes there's a surprise. There was in his speech challenging Johnson's Asian policy.

Fulbright said, in conclusion, that he has had some "very serious" discussions with the President's adviser, Rostow, on the subject of the U. S. role in Asia.

"I can only say on my own authority," the senator declared, "that my impression is that he (Rostow) believes it is the proper role for this country to become a major Asian power, to create a balance there as opposed to China and Russia.

"I am not saying that this policy is necessarily wrong," the senator continued.

"It comes as a great shock to me to think that this concept of our role could be contemplated without consideration by the Senate.

"I do not say that I would oppose such a policy, but I would like to study the matter thoroughly before I would be willing to support commitments to take this country into Asia in that fashion."

None of this had much reality after Moyers gave his interpretations of Johnson's views, and therefore Fulbright will not be distressed by having to decide immediately whether or not Rostow is right.

For all its absurdities, the latest Fulbright foray has at least served the purpose of clarifying the public's understanding of Johnson's aims and motives with respect to Asia. They do not appear different in principle, but only greater in degree, than those of his predecessor, President Kennedy. The emphasis is stronger, much stronger. The aims are the same: The Mekong River development, the Asian Bank, participation in the economic progress of Asia.

Rather than establishing U.S. hegemony in Asia, Johnson seeks a peace of conciliation between Communist and non-Communist nations. He holds out his hand to China as it never was held out by his predecessors. He offers aid and assistance in exchange for peace, and he will not give up in Viet Nam.

What Fulbright, and those who agree with him, do not like is that Johnson will not walk out of Asia and act as if it were some strange unknown land under the rule of Ghengis Khan.

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